

HPV VACCINE

What is the HPV Vaccine?

There are two HPV vaccines that will protect against some types of human papillomavirus (HPV). One vaccine, Gardasil, vaccine protects against four types of HPV which cause 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts and is approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The other vaccine will protect against the two types of HPV that cause 70% of cervical cancers and is not yet approved by the FDA.

The vaccines will not protect against all types of HPV or other sexually transmitted infections. The vaccines also will not prevent pregnancy.

It is hard to know how long new vaccines will protect against disease. So far, studies have shown that protection lasts 2.5 to 4.5 years. Research will continue to determine how long each vaccine's protection lasts.

[Click here for more information about the HPV vaccine](#)

Who should get the vaccine & when should they get it?

The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will recommend who should get the vaccines, and at what ages. The ACIP has not made these recommendations yet.

Three doses (shots) of the vaccine would be given over a six month period. The vaccine would be most effective if given before sexual activity begins. Current vaccine research has focused on girls and women. There is limited information about how well the vaccine works in boys and men.

Will the vaccine help if I already have HPV?

There isn't enough research to know for sure whether the vaccine will help people that already have HPV. The HPV vaccine will do no harm if you are already infected. It **may** help prevent re-infection with HPV.

Where can I get it?

Ask your doctor, nurse, or [local health clinic](#) to find out whether you need the vaccine and where you can get it.

What is HPV & how does it affect the body?

HPV is a very common virus. There are many types of HPV. Most are harmless and do not cause infections or symptoms. Some types of HPV can cause cervical cancer or genital warts.

Click here for more information on [HPV](#), [genital warts](#) or [cervical cancer](#).

How is it spread?

HPV is spread through skin to skin contact, including genital contact. Most people who have HPV do not have any symptoms. They can have the virus and easily spread it to others without even knowing.

Who can get it?

At least 50 percent of sexually active people will get HPV at some time in their lives. Both women and men can get HPV, and spread it to others without realizing they have the virus. HPV infection is most common in women and men in their late teens and early 20's.

The best way to prevent HPV is to abstain from all sexual activity. People with only one lifetime partner can get HPV if their partner had been sexually active in a previous relationship. The success of condoms in preventing HPV infection is unknown. Condom users do have lower cervical cancer rates. HPV infections can occur in both male and female genital areas whether or not they are covered by a latex condom. Condoms are a good way to prevent sexually transmitted infections like HIV, gonorrhea, and chlamydia.

How do I know if I have HPV?

Some people know they have HPV because they have symptoms, such as genital warts. Most people **don't know** they have HPV because they have no signs or symptoms.

Women may find out they have HPV through cervical cancer screening (Pap tests) and HPV antibody testing. Healthcare providers usually do not test for HPV unless they find abnormal cell changes. Providers don't routinely test women or men for HPV at this time. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have questions about HPV testing.

How does HPV cause cervical cancer?

Some types of HPV can infect cells in the cervix (the opening to the uterus/womb) and cause abnormalities. If the infection continues untreated, the abnormalities can lead to cervical cancer. This is usually a slow process. It can take years for HPV infection to progress to cervical cancer.

Pap tests can detect cell changes long before cervical cancer develops. Women who get the HPV vaccine should continue getting Pap tests. The vaccines do not protect against all the types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer.

Where can I find more information?

HPV Infection & Vaccine

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
American Social Health Association
Food and Drug Administration

www.cdc.gov/std/hpv
www.ashastd.org
www.fda.gov/cber/vaccines.htm

Cervical Cancer

American Cancer Society
National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.org
www.cancer.gov

Washington State Department of Health Programs

Breast and Cervical Health Program
Comprehensive Cancer Control
Family Planning and Reproductive Health
Immunization Program CHILD Profile
Sexually Transmitted Diseases

www.doh.wa.gov/wbchp
www.doh.wa.gov/ccc
www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/FPRH
www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize
www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/std